Part II
Class and education

Section introduction
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> We cannot teach our way out of inequality.
>
> *(Marsh 2011)*

There are two constant themes that come up in the literature on the working class and education – social reproduction and social mobility; which I'll call here the gatekeeper and escalator models of education systems. Many people presume that education is a pathway to social mobility for people from the working class. It works like a magic escalator. Indeed, many models of class use education as the primary boundary marker between the working class and the middle class, implying that once a person has become educated, that person is no longer working class. This is highly problematic, as will be discussed later. There is another problem here, one we can call the gatekeeper problem. Because education has become a marker of class and therefore *moral worth* and deservingness (at minimum, of a salary versus a wage), success in education cannot be open to all (Hurst 2010). Students are sorted and graded continuously (notice the eerie concordance of double words like 'grade' and 'class').

    Much scholarly literature highlights the ways in which working-class kids are disadvantaged at school by teacher biases (Brantlinger 2003), barriers to access/unequal resources (Sacks 2007), lowered aspirations and expectations (Fordham 1996), and internalized classism (and racism) (Willis 2017) to name just a few. In this view, schools reproduce the unequal social system, transferring one generation's advantages (or disadvantages) on to the next. For many of these scholars, the ultimate goal is to get schools operating less like gatekeepers and more like escalators, especially given the (supposed) needs of a highly advanced technological society (Stevens, Armstrong, and Arum 2008). The reasoning goes as follows: if we could only get more students to college, we could solve both labor market shortages and social inequality. Other scholars, including myself (Hurst 2012), call this into question. It is a lazy answer to a bigger problem. While we would like everyone to have equal opportunities to succeed in school, we are already seeing too many of our graduates fail to find safe places in the middle class (Brinton 2011; Brown, Lauder and Ashton 2011; Burke 2016; Wolff 2006). Cappelli's (2015) sobering answer to the question 'will college pay off?' is largely that 'it depends' (on where you go to college, what you study, and, to a very large extent, who your parents are). It is time to recognize that we simply 'cannot teach or learn our way out of inequality' (Marsh 2011).

In this context, universal access to a college degree will only make further gradations (Which college? Which degree?) more salient. Nevertheless, this mantra of 'college for all' guides much current policy and research today, both in the US and globally (Rosenbaum 2001). We are stuck in the framework of thinking of college as an escalator to the middle class, even as many researchers point out that the goal line keeps moving for the working class, from getting a high school degree to getting a college degree to, increasingly, getting a college degree from the right program and/or getting a graduate degree (thus bringing us back to the gatekeeper function). I will discuss the consequences of using these two models, gatekeeper and escalator, to think about higher education, before turning to working-class studies as an alternative way forward. The following chapters demonstrate the need for an alternative way of thinking about education. If we are to send many more students to college than ever before, we need an educational system that works in collaboration with all its students, in projects that reimagine, rather than simply reinscribe, the larger social systems in which we find ourselves embedded.

The rise and consequences of the escalator model

The notion of education as an escalator is a historical one. The desire to reduce inequality by broadening access to salaried careers and professions has animated all the great educational reform movements of the modern era (Hochschild and Scovronick 2003; Lucas 1999; Rudolph 1962; Pritchard 1990; Sacks 2007). In the US, the Morrill Act (the enabling act of the Land Grant colleges) was said to have 'made possible the higher instruction of the children of workers and farmers and thus enabled social mobility and the equality of educational opportunity to become realities in a political democracy' (Brickman and Lehrer 1962, 11). The rise of a public university system was, in turn, predicated on earlier reform movements for public primary and secondary education, movements led by and for working-class people (Neem 2017). The conversations we have today about increasing access to college mirror those we were having in the nineteenth century about increasing access to high school.

These reform movements worked, to a point. As late as 1947, most adult Americans (76%) did not even have a high school degree, while less than 5% had a four-year college degree. Today, almost everyone eventually earns a high school degree, and one-third of all adults have earned a four-year college degree (US Census Bureau). Note that these figures are still far from the ideal of a thoroughly educated populace. Other industrialized countries have similar (or lower) rates of college participation (Shavit, Müller, and Tame 1998; Smeeding, Jäntti, and Erikson 2011), although almost everyone graduates from secondary school.

Despite the fact that we have in no way reached 'universal access' to post-secondary education, higher education is perversely seen as the near exclusive path to upward social mobility. Education generally is no longer supposed to function as a gatekeeper, barring the *hoi polloi* from elite positions. This belief in the escalator function comes with a price, however, as those who *do not succeed* academically have no one to blame but themselves. You want to do well in life? Stay in school. Growing up in such a culture, we tend to take the normalcy of this for granted. 'The rise of education as the near sole arbitrator of access to adult status has been so complete that former processes [of social advancement] – sinecure, occupational inheritance, religious charisma, guild training, patronage, caste – appear now as exotic social relics' (Baker 2014, 54). Increasingly, one's level of education defines one's social position.

A great curiosity of the current system is that despite all the reforms, the end result has generally been a rising of the educational expectations without an equalizing of life opportunities. Those who receive more (and better) forms of higher education monopolize the good positions. This was noted as early as the 1970s in France.

> The net result is that the relation between education and occupational status described changes very little over time. What does change is the number of years of schooling associated with each educational class. … As a result, lower-class people become progressively better educated on the average, but their status expectations remain more or less constant.
>
> *(Boudon 1974, 183)*

The phenomenon has been noted many times since. In one cross-national study of mass educational systems, the authors found that 'nonelite students are never able to displace elite students; they gain access only when additional openings are generated and only after the more advantaged social stratum has accessed the most valued level of education' (Attewell and Newman 2010, 17). Across the world, 'higher education overall became more unequal as participation rates went up' (in Rhoten and Calhoun 2011, 16). Most of us are running faster to fall further behind.

Actually, there are only two examples that I know of in which educational reforms did make a clear difference in breaking down inequalities, and these are the cases of the Soviet Union (Fitzpatrick 1979) and Communist China during its Cultural Revolution (Deng and Treiman 1997). Communist ideology allowed for affirmative action programs for children of peasants and workers, turning the customary class advantages on their head. It need hardly go mentioned that these programs were bitterly contested, often shattering to the individuals involved, and have largely disappeared. These examples highlight the point made by Andy Green, in his comparative study of the educational systems of the US, France, and England, that it is the class relations of society which ultimately determine the purposes of schooling.

> It was the different forms of hegemony operating between the dominant and subordinate classes which was ultimately responsible for what schools did, for who they allowed to go to what type of school and for what they taught them when they were there.
>
> *(Green 1990, 311)*

To break down the inequalities reproduced through education, in other words, takes a lot more than getting more people educated. It requires major tinkering in society itself.

More often, however, the problem of universal education programs is not that they are too effective (and therefore incredibly destructive to accustomed privileges, including to the people who bear them), but that they are not nearly effective enough. Or, more exactly, that they *appear* effective when really they do very little to alter the fundamental classed system in place. For one, universal education programs appear to reward those with merit through advancement up the educational ladders. What this means on the ground is that those who *do not* go to college are more likely to be blamed individually. And since we know that educational programs are not autonomous from the larger social systems in which they are embedded, this means that current class positions are *legitimated* through the educational system (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977).

Martin Trow, the person who gave us the boosterish concept of successive eras of education from elite (early twentieth century) to mass (mid twentieth century) to universal (late twentieth century), penned a series of critical essays in his later years. He argued that 'failure to go on to higher education from secondary school is increasingly a mark of some defect of mind or character that has to be explained or justified or apologized for' (Trow, in Burrage 2010, 95). This holds as true, if not truer, for students from middle- and upper-class families as it does for working-class students. But universal education has had a particularly negative impact on the working class, as a class. Trow pointed to the impact of a 'brain drain' on the working class, arguing that this 'drain through education out of the unions of their best and brightest young members is one of the mechanisms' of loss of union power today (219). Ultimately, he argued,

'if we have any national policy regarding social or economic class, it is an educational policy designed not to strengthen the working class, or ameliorate its conditions, but to abolish it' (225). The escalator may carry a few individuals upwards, but most of the class, as a class, remain milling around at the bottom, often relatively worse off than before the escalator began carrying away their best and brightest stars.

Interestingly, Trow's comments here echo some of the early criticisms of mass education by social conservatives. In nineteenth-century France, for example, it was widely held that education should be confined to the rich, 'for, if it were extended to the poor, it would turn them against manual labor and make social misfits of them' (Ariés 1962, 309). Actually, Ariés points out that this critique has very long roots, and quotes a seventeenth-century critic of local town schools.

> How are we to stop this flood of education which is submerging so many cottages, depopulating so many villages, producing so many charlatans, intriguers, envious, angry and unhappy people of all sorts, and introducing confusion into every class and condition?
>
> *(311)*

One thing that these conservative writers seemed to recognize was that access to education was not the same thing as access to position. We have forgotten that in our rush to send everyone to college, but more on that later.

Whereas the nineteenth-century reform movement was rooted in ideas of progressive education for advancing civic participation (as in Horace Mann's common school movement), the twentieth-century push for education was increasingly tied to individual advancement. Since World War II, 'very little has been heard of "rising with your class," and a great deal about the need to create more truly equal opportunities for individual advancement for all through education – and especially through higher education' (Trow, in Burrage 2010, 223). Eventually, this led to today's policies of privatization and the defunding of public institutions. If the only benefit is personal, why should the public get involved at all? Education reforms under Secretary of Education DeVos are likely to intensify the trend toward individual purchase of educational packages that are then used to help secure access to the 'best' colleges. Any notion of education 'for the public good' seems to have been lost.

Indeed, it is hard to discuss education today other than in terms of individual success within a capitalist society. By the late twentieth century, in both the US and the UK, the purpose of education was squarely linked with gaining access to jobs, but as the underlying capitalist system in which these jobs were located was never questioned, getting an education became a credential for managerial and professional positions, exacerbating divisions within the labor force. The goal may be 'universal education', but how this is supposed to square with a continued need for a brutalized and dominated working class goes undiscussed. The contradictions of such a setup are becoming more pronounced. 'The notion of an overwhelming surge in educational requirements for jobs is absurd, and the promotion of college for all is in some ways dishonest' (Grubb and Lazerson 2004, 19). As the costs of higher education have mounted and public support has withered, it is harder to overlook the classing and sorting taking place. We may be getting more students through high school and into college, but many of them are failing to gain a degree and/or graduating with great debt, leaving them in a more precarious position than they would have been had they never continued education (Collinge 2010; Goldrick-Rab 2016; Hurst 2012, 2019). The size of this debt, nationally speaking, is also something policymakers are taking note of, as it threatens to spill over into the broader economy (Mettler 2014; Rothstein and Rouse 2007).

Understanding how education remains a gatekeeper

> The American dream is egalitarian at the starting point in this 'race of life,' but not at the end. That is not a paradox; it is simply an ideological choice. …The paradox lies in the fact that schools are supposed to equalize opportunities across generations and to create democratic citizens out of each generation, but people naturally wish to give their own children an advantage in attaining wealth or power, and some can do it. When they do, everyone does not start equally, politically or economically. This circle cannot be squared.
>
> *(Hochschild and Scovronick 2003, 2)*

Researchers follow the story, while theorists take a step back and look at bigger structures in which the story is unfolding. Taking a big picture here means noting what gets discussed and what doesn't. A rising area of sociological research in education examines the impact and power of *parents* on maximizing and leveraging school success (Cucchiara 2013; Devine 2004; Johnson 2006; Goyette and Lareau 2014; Hamilton 2016; Lareau 1989, 2003; Smeeding, Jäntti, and Erikson 2011). From a theoretical perspective, this is a giant signpost warning: 'Danger ahead! Our inequality is in danger of spilling into caste-like territory!' It also marks the limits of an individualistic focus. Students are not succeeding on their individual merits, but through a confluence of classed resources. Phil Brown calls this wave of socio-historical development of education, 'parentology', and it is characterized by 'a shift away from the "ideology of meritocracy" to … the "ideology of parentocracy"' (Brown 1990).

Neoliberalism and its focus on markets and individual choice favor highly resourced parents. 'Within the market rules of exclusion both consumers and producers are encouraged by the rewards and disciplines of market forces, and are legitimated by the values of the personal standpoint in their quest for positional advantage over others' (Ball 2003, 21). As the commitment to public education vanishes, middle-class and upper-class parents are wielding their know-how, social networks, and money to ensure that their children access the right kinds of schools at the right times. The involvement of parents has been noticed from preschool through college and beyond. Hamilton (2016) demonstrates how privileged parents leverage contacts and provide financial support to help their children successfully transition from college to career. Graduating from the same college with the same degree can lead to drastically unequal outcomes, dependent on the power and resources of one's parents. At the same time, the stress on middle-class parents to produce successful middle-class children is intense (Heiman 2015; Power et al. 2003). We are a far place today from seeing schools as a public good, rather than as helping the material interests of particular parents (Cucchiara 2013, 203). Further damaging is research that shows that 'parental involvement' is only effective when it is involves highly resourced parents, so encouraging working-class parents to attend PTA meetings and open houses is really not going to make a difference (Robinson 2014).

Sometimes, it is those who have experienced social mobility against the odds that have the greatest insight into how the system works. This is certainly the case with the brilliant social theorist Pierre Bourdieu. Himself the provincial son of a postal clerk and grandson of peasants, Bourdieu catapulted to the very top of the French academic hierarchy (Bourdieu 2008). His work has influenced multiple disciplines from sociology to literature, anthropology to architecture, political science to art to education. In the 1970s and 1980s, the English-speaking world mostly knew Bourdieu as a social reproduction theorist, one who argued that schools maintained social inequality by privileging and rewarding the cultural capital of its higher-classed students. For example, an early study by Bourdieu compared how primary school teachers used different language when describing 'A'-grade work by students, depending upon what was known of

their parents' occupations. Bourgeois students were praised as 'innately talented' or 'brilliant', while working-class students were described as 'hard-working' and, sometimes, as merely imitative (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977). Over time, he argued, working-class students, even those of high ability, took the lesson to heart that school was 'not for them' and left early, thus reproducing inequality inter-generationally without any need for overt or explicit limits on working-class access to higher levels of education. This accords well with a recent study of high school valedictorians that found many working-class high achievers never even apply to college (Radford 2013).

Some American scholars who read Bourdieu's early work on education criticized him for being pessimistic and deterministic. There seemed little possibility of school as an escalator. But this, I would argue, was a serious misreading. Having himself been helped up the class ladder by education, Bourdieu was aware that reproducing class inequalities does not mean that any one individual's fate is determined at birth. Instead, the tendency is to advance those whose habits and worldviews fit them for advancement and to subvert all others to different pathways. Being fit for advancement had much less to do with intrinsic merit or aptitude than sharing the cultural norms and expectations of those already advanced, but this is not *biological* or inherent to a person. Indeed, Bourdieu was aware of the costs of so-called upward social mobility, leading those who experienced this social dislocation divided in both loyalties and habits, caught between two worlds, as so ably described by many working-class academics. Additionally, 'controlled mobility of a limited number of individuals' has the advantage of strengthening the system, making it appear more fair and open than it actually is (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977, 54). Unlike many who see universal access as a precondition to a more fair and open society, Bourdieu saw education, especially at the higher levels, as inextricable from a dominant position and worldview – one could join, but he or she would have to change to do so. The escalator was there for a few to use, if they were willing to take it where it was headed.

The truth is, not everyone is willing to take the escalator into the middle class. Even smart working-class kids who are encouraged by teachers might choose not to get on the escalator, because they know that escalator will take them away from the people they love. The failure of so many talented kids to continue their schooling has led some researchers to argue they have 'stunted aspirations' (Bradley and Ingram 2012; Roberts and Evans 2012; Beasley 2011; Davidson 2011) or internalized classist (and racist) conceptions of their self-worth (Fordham 1996; Ochoa 2013), or that they actively resist what they see as middle-class culture (Willis 2017; Perry 2002). I think a lot of this misses the heart of the problem. Succeeding in a stratified society means joining the other team. This can cause a lot of ambivalence, to say the least. Valerie Walkerdine describes her own experience thusly:

> They held out a dream. Come, they told me. It is yours. You are chosen. They didn't tell me, however, that for years, I would no longer feel any sense of belonging, nor any sense of safety. That I didn't belong in the new place, any more than I now belonged in the old. So, around every corner of apparent choice lurked doubt and uncertainty.
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> *(Quoted in Bourke 1994, 120)*

In my own research with working-class college students, I found that they develop different strategies for dealing with the mismatch between class cultures and the attendant discomfort with learning in a middle-class space (Hurst 2010). Some remain stubbornly attached to their working-class roots, even to the detriment of their academic and social success (I called these 'Loyalists'), while others go so far as rejecting their pasts in a bid at assimilation into the middle

class (I called these 'Renegades'). A lucky few are able, like 'Double Agents', to move freely between class cultures and social groups. Actually, this insight was not new, as working-class academics (college faculty with working-class roots) have long published accounts descriptive of the experience of being a 'stranger in paradise' (Ryan and Sackrey 1984) and how one deals with this experience. Similar to my typology, for example, Barb Jensen (2012) notes three coping strategies for what she calls 'crossovers': distancing, resisting, and building bridges.

Working-class academics are proof of much of Bourdieu's commentary on the relationship between class and education. These are scholars who have advanced on the escalator of education but who can be deeply ambivalent about the value of this so-called advancement (Dews and Law 1995; Grimes and Morris 1997; Matthys 2012; Muzzatti and Samarco 2005; Oldfield and Johnson 2009; Ryan and Sackrey 1984; Welsch 2005; Yates 2007). Many would like to reorient the system to the needs and value of working-class persons (hooks 1994; Linkon 1999). As a group, working-class academics may point us toward an alternative way of thinking about what education is for, one that not only allows working-class people in but also works with and for them and their communities, rather than presuming to 'escalate' them out of the working class entirely.

College as a collaborator

We need not remain stuck between the two-sides-of-the-same-coin escalator and gatekeeper models of higher education. Both are premised on college's relationship with the class system, and neither presume to alter this substantially. While 'college as gatekeeper' keeps out working-class students, 'college as escalator' brings them in only to change them, or even worse, changes them but still doesn't help them get the kind of well-paid, rewarding work they hoped to get by earning a degree. But we can envision an alternative model in which college collaborates with the working class. How might this work? First, colleges can and sometimes are places of reorientation and democratic training. Although this is not an easy task in today's austerity climate, harsh times open up previously foreclosed spaces. A growing backlash against the costs of college and skepticism over whether it delivers what it has been promising means the link between higher education and the middle class is loosening. Let us rethink what we want out of our educational systems now. Let us draw from the strengths working-class people provide to reorient our systems in a way that better serves not them specifically, but all of us.

Including working-class students in the academy can contribute to a better system for all. First, these students generally have a greater awareness of alternative or multiple perspectives. Second, they are particularly sensitive to issues of oppression and sympathy toward other marginalized groups. Third, they have shown a great deal of resourcefulness in their lives already, as well as an immense reservoir of tenacity, discipline, and hard work. They really want to be in college! As outsiders, working-class college students can produce real insights into the nature, limitations, and discourse of academia. Working-class college students not only bring diversity (as in diverse opinions, viewpoints, and experiential bases) with them to school, but might also encourage a different vision of education – one premised on equality and social justice as much as or more than individualism and competitiveness. As Bourdieu once noted, 'out-of-place people, *déclassé* upwards or downwards, are the troublemakers who often make history. […] [T]he greatest contributions to social science have been made by people who were not perfectly in their element in the social world as it is' (Bourdieu 1993, 47).

In order to welcome these students, to truly make them feel at home in the academy and full participants, we need more working-class studies programs. Working-class studies programs are very important for reclaiming education's public mission (both in the sense of education for all

and training for democratic participation), but also for a deeper reconceptualization of what education can be. Working-class studies is one of the only 'disciplines' which centers class relations at its core of what is to be explained. Whereas class relations are often the backdrop to many fields of study, they operate more like the air we breathe, taken for granted and unrecognized. 'Class has a color. It is what you eat; it is how you eat. ... It shapes reputation. It opens and closes doors. ... And though seemingly omnipresent, it remains strangely absent from the collective conscious' (Stich 2012, 105). Working-class studies puts relations of power and inequality squarely at the center of our attention, thus allowing us to question and contest the structures that produce such relations.

The chapters included here all grapple, in one way or another, with the issue of schools as gatekeepers or escalators. In 'Learning our place: Social reproduction in K–12 schooling', Deborah M. Warnock focuses on social class inequalities in educational experiences and outcomes among K–12 students in the US. Mostly following a social reproduction lens, Warnock discusses the key landmarks of scholarship on socioeconomic stratification in schooling in the past fifty years, as well as the constant tension of projects to reform school to make them function as escalators rather than gatekeepers. The second article, 'Being working class in the English classroom', by Diane Reay, turns attention to working-class students themselves. Reay argues '[t]he working-class experience of education has traditionally been one of educational failure, not success' (p. 130). What is this experience of failure like from the perspective of those living it? For one thing, many aspects of education appear 'pointless and irrelevant' (p. 131). In most schools, working-class knowledge is denigrated, and working-class kids struggle for some form of recognition. Reay's interviews with working-class students in the English school system speak volumes about the ways that the gatekeeping mechanism of education persists. A note in passing, here. Although Warnock's article focuses on US scholarship on social reproduction, and Reay's on students in the UK system, what they report echoes similar scholarship on both sides of the pond. Like the US, the UK has spent the past several decades trying on reforms to promote social mobility. Like the UK, working-class students in the US often feel alienated and marginalized, and dropout rates are much higher than those of their peers. This cross-national concordance is further evidence that the relationship between education and class is a highly structured one, working at a macro-historical level that transcends national boundaries.

What happens when working-class students do go to college? Are their experiences and outcomes similar to their peers? Does higher education lead to social mobility? Bettina Spencer's 'Getting schooled: Working-class students in higher education' takes a deeper look at working-class students in higher education. Drawing on psychological literature, she explores how classist stereotypes influence academic performance and how working-class culture influences a student's sense of belonging. She ends the chapter describing prejudice-reduction techniques which may make college feel more inclusive for students from the working class.

One of the reasons working-class students may feel alienated from the academy is its focus on middle-class issues and concerns. Janet Zandy once asked us to imagine 'what it would be like if the history and culture of working-class people were at the center of educational practices' (2001, xiv). Lisa A. Kirby takes this to heart in her chapter, 'The pedagogy of class: Teaching working-class life and culture in the academy.' She explores strategies for teaching working-class culture and experience through literature, popular culture, and history. Introducing these topics will help *all* students better understand and appreciate the diversity of American experience.

Colleen H. Clements and Mark D. Vagle take this focus on diversity further in their chapter, 'Working-class student experiences: Toward a social class-sensitive pedagogy for K–12 schools, teachers, and teacher educators'. They focus particularly on the ways that 'working class' as an

identity is racialized as white and what the implications for this are in our teaching and broader culture. In what ways do embodied experiences of being working-class intersect with racialized identity in educational spaces? How are current social hierarchies created and maintained at the intersections of race and class, and what is the role of education in reinforcing those hierarchies? Like Kirby and Spencer, the authors conclude with suggestions for helpful educational practices.

How can we support our working-class students on campus? Colby R. King and Sean H. McPherson discuss a program they helped organize at Bridgewater State University in 'Class Beyond the Classroom: Supporting working-class and first-generation students, faculty, and staff'. Consisting of working-class faculty and staff or those first in their families to attend college, the Class Beyond the Classroom project employs a variety of activities, including story-sharing panel discussions, to break down classism and provide support for working-class and first-generation college students. Their program, especially the idea of telling 'stories' has been widely imitated on other campuses and could serve as a useful model for others to follow. They conclude with suggestions for how to develop a similar program at one's own campus.

So, what is the relationship between education and the working class? Is that relationship the same now, under late capitalism, as in the years immediately following World War II, when 'mass' and 'universal' education first became the objective of college administrators and policymakers (in both the US and UK)? And is this different from the great era of the founding of land-grant public colleges in the US? Perhaps we should ask what *should* be the relationship between education and *the class system*?

We need to think clearly about what we want. The pieces here help us understand more about the relationship between education and the working class. But they also help us ask what the relationship *should* be. What are the contradictions of education within a capitalist system? Do we want to provide an escalator for working-class students, or teach working-class students to dismantle the building altogether? How might education work to help produce rather than maintain an unequal social system? What insights can we learn from the experiences in the academy of our working-class college students and working-class academics? Will our existence provide a critical mass for change? How can we make the institution less middle class? How might this help everyone?

For example, what if schools taught us how to make new places, rather than taking the one provided for us? What would happen if we incorporated working-class knowledge into our schools? Perhaps if our schools were less classist and psychologically damaging to so many of our learners, less than half of Americans would think colleges were detrimental to the nation. Learning about working-class history and past social movements (including the fight for public education) could provide a vision of a better future. An inclusive vision can only happen (according to the old Marxist in me) by breaking through the racial, gender, and national divisions that have contained working-class solidarity. Regardless of our own backgrounds, we can model class sensitivity, awareness, and desire for change for our students. By telling our stories, we link the past to the present and articulate the future. And, yes, we need to resist 'becoming the man'. Figure out what you are doing in academia. What role are you playing? What is your vision of education? Fight for it.

This is why working-class studies is so important and the chapters in this book so instructive. For too long, working-class people were left out of the academy. Studies of working-class life, literature, and politics were rare. This has been changing, especially since the era of 'mass education' following World War II. And yet, too often the academy has seen these studies as tangential to the reproduction of the next generation of middle-class professionals. But working-class studies has the potential to transform the academy as a place in which alternative futures and less classist

social systems can be imagined and practiced. Far from being a gatekeeper, or even an escalator to the middle class, the academy can be a collaborator with all its diverse citizens, allowing the free development of each for the benefit of all. Working-class studies can aid in this endeavor, opening up the academy to new ways of thinking about its place in the larger social system, breaking or questioning its ties to the reproduction of class privilege.

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